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PRESENTATION
OF THE
ROYAL AWARDS.

THE Founder's Gold Medal to Dr. THOMAS THOMSON, M.D., F.R.S., for his labours in exploring the Western Himalayas and Tibet, and for his highly valuable work thereon, published in 1852, in which he described, for the first time, the true physical geography of those regions, as well as the botany, geology, and the former and present glacial action in these lofty mountains. The Patron's or Victoria Gold Medal to Mr. WILLIAM CHANDLESS, M.A., for his recent unaided exploration of the River Purûs, from its mouth on the River Amazons nearly to its sources, a distance of 1866 miles, and for laying down the course of this previously undefined great stream by a continuous series of astronomical observations of latitude and longitude and compass bearings.

The PRESIDENT addressed the meeting as follows :—

“ GENTLEMEN,

“ In previous Addresses to the Royal Geographical Society I have dwelt so emphatically upon the value of the researches and work of Dr. Thomas Thomson, that my associates can well suppose the award of the Founder's Medal to this distinguished man has given me the truest satisfaction. Eminent among living naturalists, Dr. Thomson, in the course of his arduous expedition, in which Botany was his chief object, traversed a large tract of wild and mountainous country hitherto unexplored, crossed for the first time the dividing range of the great Asiatic continent, brought back collections that link the labours of the Russian botanists in the north with those of the English in the south, and carefully laid down every feature in the Physical Geography and Geology of the vast elevated region whence the Indus and its tributaries take their rise, amid perpetual glaciers and at enormous heights above the sea.

“ Another rare merit is, that he embodied these researches in

a work which, whether for modesty of style, accuracy, as well as breadth of view, or as being the first to demonstrate the true physical structure of the mountain masses of North-Western India and trace their water systems, climate, and productions, must be considered as of the highest value by naturalists, geographers, and geologists.

"To Dr. Thomson we owe the final abandonment of an idea long prevalent, and which was entertained even by my illustrious friend Humboldt, that Tibet was an elevated plain or plateau; and with this fell also many subsidiary theories relating to the snow-line, glaciers, temperature, and climate of Central Asia. In short, from the date of Thomson's researches, rational superseded conjectural geography as regarded that vast and still to a great extent unexplored area.

"These are not merely my words—they are those of that eminent naturalist, Joseph Hooker, whose explorations in the Eastern Himalayas rival those of Thomas Thomson in the West. They were also the matured opinions of the late distinguished and ever-to-be-regretted Edward Forbes.

"Not content with his exertions in the North-West, Thomson applied on their completion for leave to explore the Eastern Himalayas, and for this purpose joined Dr. Hooker in Sikkim, spending a year and a half there, and in the Khasia hills of Eastern Bengal, before he returned to Europe on furlough.

"Now, when I inform you, my associates, that for all these devoted and important services Dr. Thomson never received any reward, nor even public thanks, but, on the contrary, was left to publish his work at his own cost and to his heavy loss, you will all rejoice with me that, although we have much too long delayed our gift, we have at last placed ourselves in a befitting position by rendering justice and all honour to such a distinguished man."

The PRESIDENT then addressed the Medallist in these words:—

"Dr. THOMSON,

"The opinions which are expressed in the brief estimate of your merit which I have just read, will find, I am sure, an echo not merely in this Society, but in every scientific body of Britain and her colonies. Let me assure you that, often as it has fallen to my lot to present our Medals to men distinguished for their boldness of adventure, I can bring to mind no occasion in which intrepidity and perseverance were more happily united with high scientific acquirement than they were in your own person, when you carried out those admirable researches for which we gratefully offer you our highest honour.

"I have, indeed, a peculiar pleasure in placing this Medal in your hands in the presence not only of some distinguished botanists of our own country, but also of foreign botanists, headed by that eminent man, M. de Candolle; for I am certain they feel as strongly

as I do, that the researches of the Botanist and the Geographer are essentially bound up together, as indeed the great results obtained by Humboldt, Robert Brown and others, as well as by yourself, have abundantly demonstrated."

Dr. THOMSON replied :

"SIR,—I have no words to express my sense of the very unexpected honour conferred on me, through you, by the Royal Geographical Society. Its value is, if possible, much enhanced by the very flattering manner in which you have been so good as to speak of my humble services to geography. As we all know, a traveller in new or little known countries finds in the success of his explorations an ample reward for all his toils : I scarcely expected that the observations I made should be remembered at all after so many years. It is therefore especially gratifying to me to find that they are regarded as of importance by such high authority. I beg to thank you again most cordially for the honour you have conferred on me."

M. DE CANDOLLE then rose, and in a few words expressed his great satisfaction at being present when the highest reward of the Royal Geographical Society was bestowed on a botanical traveller. He corroborated the statements of the President, with regard to the high value of the researches of Dr. Thomson in the Western Himalayas and Tibet, which, in conjunction with those of Russian *savans* in the North, had thrown great light on the Botanical Geography of inner Asia.

The PRESIDENT next addressed himself to Mr. Cecil Long, the brother of the recipient of the Victoria or Patron's Medal :—

"Mr. LONG,

"The brilliancy and completeness of the geographical exploit of your brother, Mr. William Chandless, in tracing by his own unaided exertions the whole course of the River Purûs, one of the longest of the tributaries of the Amazons, so impressed my colleagues of the Council of this Society, that he was at once fixed upon as meriting one of the Gold Medals of the present year. I can truly say that in this decision I entirely concurred. The Purûs has been, from nearly the foundation of this Society, a river in which we have taken the greatest interest, and the memoirs which have been published upon it in the volumes of our Journal have testified to the importance and the difficulty of obtaining a correct knowledge of the course and direction of a stream known to be of great magnitude and navigability. Accounts had been published, showing the almost insurmountable nature of the obstacles to the exploration of the river in Southern Peru, supposed to be the upper portion of the Purûs, and information had reached us of several unsuccessful attempts on the

part of expeditions despatched by the Brazilian Government to ascend it from its mouth. Our surprise and gratification may, therefore, be well conceived when we received the news that an English private gentleman, travelling in South America for the pure love of science, had applied himself unostentatiously to the solution of this geographical problem, and had been completely successful. He had qualified himself for such an undertaking by previous travels in different parts of both South and North America, particularly by his exploration of the River Tapajos, an account of which he communicated to this Society in 1862, and by his journey across North America, as narrated in a work he published, entitled 'A Visit to the Salt Lake.' And now, providing himself with suitable instruments for surveying, and embarking with only one servant in a small canoe of the country manned by Indians, he ascended the great river for 1866 miles, and has sent us as a result of his work a map of its whole course, projected by himself with great minuteness from his own observations. Not content with this first arduous survey, he resolved to ascend the river a second time, and explore its principal tributary with a view to settle the question of its supposed connection with the rivers of Southern Peru; and I rejoice to hear that he has returned successful from his second voyage, and has mapped the tributary with the same minuteness as he had previously done the main stream.

"I cannot but admire the boldness with which such undertakings have been conceived and the skill with which their results have been worked out. The great danger encountered in travelling for months through a country of interminable forest, in which lurk hordes of savage Indians, is shown in the treacherous slaughter of your brother's servant and his boat's crew in descending the river. The result of Mr. Chandless's survey has been the laying down a vast tract of country previously unexplored, and a profound modification of all our maps of the interior of tropical South America. I entrust this well-earned mark of the esteem of Geographers to you, Sir, in the hope that you as well as ourselves may be gratified with the safe return of your brother, on the termination of his self-imposed labours."

Mr. LONG then spoke as follows:—

"Sir R. MURCHISON,—On behalf of my brother, William Chandless, I accept with heartfelt pleasure the Gold Medal that the Royal Geographical Society have conferred upon him; for it is a testimonial from this great and important body, that they admire the zeal and energy displayed by my brother in his explorations, and set a high value upon the results of his labours. Although, indeed, with him they have been labours of love, undertaken and prosecuted with no desire of reward, but simply for the love of geographical investigation. In truth, so little does my brother anticipate what

is passing here to-day, so humble is his estimate of the interest that will be taken here in his discoveries—that in his last letter from the Amazons, written since his return from his recent visit to the River Aquiry, he says, ‘I shall probably send a paper of five or six pages about it to the Royal Geographical Society; but one must not try their patience too far.’ And, Sir, if anything could add to my pride and pleasure on this occasion, it would be the warm approval with which the learned and distinguished audience around me received the kind words with which you presented me this Medal, and the sketch you gave of my brother's career and travels, making them clear to all your hearers by the powerful aid of your own profound knowledge. To you, Sir, and, through you as President, to the Royal Geographical Society, I beg on behalf of my brother and myself to tender our warmest thanks. I regret exceedingly that he is not here to-day, to vindicate, in language more appropriate than I can command, and especially by the simple relation of his story, the choice of the Society. But it will be my duty to transmit to him, in South America, a faithful record of this day's proceedings. And I shall hope hereafter to be the vehicle of conveying to the Royal Geographical Society my brother's grateful thanks for the honour they have conferred upon him and his high appreciation of their approval.”

A testimonial, value 100 guineas, was then presented to M. du Chaillu, to reimburse him for the loss of his instruments in Western Africa, and as a testimonial of the importance of his services in making numerous astronomical observations to fix positions, which have much improved the cartography of the region he explored.

In presenting the testimonial, the PRESIDENT thus spoke:—

“M. DU CHAILLU,.

“I have expressed to the Royal Geographical Society, on more than one occasion, my admiration of the zeal with which you fitted out your last expedition, and of the devotion with which you endeavoured to carry it out. I congratulate you on having demonstrated the truthfulness of your former observations, particularly as relates to the Natural History of the region you explored, and for the many good astronomical observations which have enabled you to construct a more correct map of the country near the coast.

“Your bold and perilous endeavour to penetrate into the heart of Africa from the West Coast merited our warmest thanks; and, had it not been for the unfortunate accident which at once put an end to your advance, and nearly proved fatal to yourself, I have no doubt that you would, at no distant day, have won the same honours which have been conferred upon a Barth, a Livingstone, a Burton, a Speke, a Grant, and a Baker.

“Accept, then, this token of our regard, and view it as a mark of our approbation and as an incentive to future exertion.”

M. DU CHAILLU replied as follows :—

“ Sir RODERICK and Gentlemen,—Allow me to thank you for the generous manner in which you have spoken of my past labours. I accept this testimonial as a proof of the interest which the Council of the Royal Geographical Society take in my attempts to penetrate the unknown region of Equatorial Western Africa. I can only say I wish I had done more ; but it has been my lot, as all true geographers well know,—and I say it without wishing to arrogate any undue credit for myself,—to have for my task the exploration of the most difficult field in the whole of Africa. On almost every other side of the continent there has existed trade, and caravans of traders, from the coast into the interior, which have in some degree opened the way to travellers ; but inland from the Fernand Vaz and Gaboon no trader has ever been farther than a few miles, and the interior is a region of mountains and impenetrable forests. Notwithstanding, I succeeded in penetrating about 400 miles, and shall ever regret the accident which prevented me from going farther. In conclusion, permit me, Mr. President, to thank you for the kind feelings you have always entertained towards me.”

A gold watch, value 26*l.* 5*s.*, was awarded to Moola Abdul Medjid, for the service he has rendered to geographical science by his adventurous journey from Peshawer to Kokand, along the upper valley of the Oxus and across the Pamir Steppes.

The PRESIDENT, in presenting the watch, stated that Sir Henry Rawlinson, who had proposed this award in the Council, and who would have been the most fitting person to receive it on this occasion, was unavoidably absent. He trusted, however, that Lord Strangford would fulfil this duty, as he had entirely participated in the feelings and opinion of Sir Henry. He would therefore place it in his hands, in the hope that, through Sir Henry Rawlinson and the Indian Government, he would have the watch conveyed to the excellent native observer who had so well earned it. It had been stated that such gifts as these, from time to time, would stimulate a superior class of our Indian subjects to make further explorations of this nature, and be otherwise productive of much good. He therefore had great pleasure in bestowing this award.”

Lord STRANGFORD said :—

“ Gentlemen,—As Sir Roderick has informed you, the award of this watch was proposed in our Council, and I fully concurred in the proposal ; but I regret that the duty of receiving it has, through accident, fallen upon me. Sir Henry Rawlinson is a better representative of Asiatics than I can hope to be. I feel, however, much gratification in acting on the present occasion, as represen-

tative man on behalf of so vast and in some respects so highly civilised a community as our Indian subjects. I think that the present occasion is one of something more than geographical significance. It is a matter of very great importance to find so good an occasion to bind that community to us by scientific as well as political links. To us as geographers it is a great advantage to have the means of exploring countries inaccessible to Europeans, in the co-operation of these meritorious native travellers. I beg leave, in the name of Moola Abdul Medjid and of the native community of India, to return thanks for this testimonial to the President and to the Society.
